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1775

STRICTURES

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Subject of our P O L I T I C A L C O N F U S I O N S."

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P E O P L E O F A M E R I C A.

46-10-23-441

"Let's canvass him in his broad Cardinal's Hat."

SHAKESPEAR.

N E W - Y O R K, Printed.



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M D C C L X X V.

STRICTURES,

On a Pamphlet entitled "A Friendly Address to all reasonable Americans, on the Subject of our Political Confusion," &c.

A PAMPHLET entitled, A Friendly Address to all reasonable Americans, advertised and sold by Mr. James Livingston, of New-York, is of so extraordinary a nature that it is difficult for any man, who is interested in the welfare of the community (whatever contempt he may have for the performance) to remain silent.— I know not whether the author is a Layman or Ecclesiastic, but he bears strongly the characters of the latter. He has the want of candour and truth, the apparent spirit of persecution, the unforgivingness, the deadly hatred to dissenters, and the zeal for arbitrary power, which has distinguished churchmen in all ages, and more particularly the high part of the church of England; I cannot help therefore considering him as one of this order.

The design of his pamphlet is manifestly to dissolve the spirit of union, and check the noble ardor prevailing through the continent; but his zeal so far out-runs his abilities, that there is the greatest reason to think that his reverence has laboured to little effect.—His discretion seems to be still less than his genius. A man of common judgment would not so wantonly have attacked the general reigning principles and opinions of a people, whom he intends to seduce or intimidate out of their rights and privileges: For instance, I believe there are at least ninety-nine Americans in an hundred, who think that Charles the first was an execrable tyrant, that he met with no harder fate than he deserved, and that his two sons ought in justice to have made the same exit. To descant therefore on the criminality of the resistance made to that tyrant; to affect on every occasion giving the title of rebellion to the civil war which brought him to justice, is a degree of weakness which no man who is not blinded by the demon of jacobitism could possibly be guilty of.—But to preach up in this enlightened age (as he does in almost express terms) passive obedience, is a mark of lunacy, or at least it proves that the moment a head begins to itch for a mitre, it loses the faculty of reasoning; for if the principle of passive obedience is admitted, the gracious Prince, for whom his reverence professes so great

great a devotion is a down-right usurper, and the parliament, of which he speaks so respectfully, Lords and Commons, are rebels and traitors.

The doctrines he aims to inculcate are as follow. That the parliament has a right to tax you without your consent ; that the duty upon tea is no tax ; that this duty is your only grievance ; that the cause of Boston is their own concern ; that it is not your cause ; that the punishment of Boston is a just punishment ; that it is not equal to their crimes ; that the Bostonians are rebels, traitors, and pampered fanatics ; that the Congress are little better ; that no misconduct of administration can justify or excuse open disaffection : that submission is to be paid to the higher powers, whatever character they be ; that an Apostle enjoined submission to the tyrant Nero ; that of all the people under heaven the King's American subjects have the least cause for complaint ; that the present confusion of the Colonies has been occasioned by false alarms ; that none of your legal rights have been invaded ; no injury has been done you, and consequently that you can never be justified in resenting that of which you have no reason to complain ; that you are no judges of the rights of parliament ; that the parliament ought to act according to their own judgment, not according to yours, even in things which concern you principally and solely ; that they assert they have the right in question ; that you have never proved they have not ; that you have always believed or allowed they have it until the present occasion ; that the Quebec Bill is a just and constitutional bill ; that the Canadians are likely to prove the best and most loyal subjects in his Majesty's American dominions ; that there is too much reason to believe that the minds of the Americans are unprincipled, and their hearts disposed for rebellion ; that since the reduction of Canada they have been bloated with a vain opinion of their own power and importance, that the island of Great-Britain is able to govern (that is, to drag on) ten Americas ; that the moment it is known that America is no longer under the protection of Great-Britain, all the maritime powers of Europe would join to ravage your sea ports, plunder and seize your ships merely for the pleasure of ravaging* ; that all the maritime powers of the world would not dispossess Great-Britain of the empire of the sea even when America is separated from her. Now I challenge

* This is perhaps the most preposterous idea that ever was hatched in a distempered brain. America (more particularly since the distractions in Poland have taken place) has been the great granary or cella penaria of Europe.—Is it possible to conceive that the different maritime powers should

the world to produce so many wicked sentiments, stupid principles, audaciously false assertions, and monstrous absurdities; crowded together into so small a compass. All his positions are indeed so self evidently absurd and false, that it would be an insult to American understandings, seriously to attempt refuting them. I shall only beg leave to take notice of the curious argument he uses to prove the duty on tea to be no tax, it is that, unless we consent to the tax we are not to pay the duty. We may refuse purchasing it if we please. The same logic would demonstrate that a duty on beer, candles or soap would be no tax, as we are not absolutely obliged to drink beer; we may drink water, we may go to bed before it is dark, and we are not forced to wash our shirts. His assertion that Great-Britain, when divorced from her colonies, will still hold the empire of the seas in spite of all the powers of the world, is still more ingenious. It amounts to this, that without the possible means of procuring timber, iron, plank, masts, pitch, tar or hemp, to furnish out a single frigate, they may build more ships than all the world put together; that when her nursery for seamen is destroyed, and all the commerce on which the existence of seamen depends, is annihilated, they will then be able to man more fleets than the whole universe put together. But I am ashamed of trespassing on the public patience, in making strictures on such ridiculous articles, I shall therefore pass to some questions which have not been so much agitated, and on which if I mistake not, his reverence lays the greatest stress; for as he modestly declares, that he has no opinion of your courage, it was natural for him to consider intimidation and terror, as the most powerful figures of rhetoric. Regular armies from Great-Britain, Hessian, Hanoverians, royal standards erected, skilful Generals, legions of Canadians

unite to deprive themselves of the chief means of subsistence, merely for the sun's sake? Is it not more natural to suppose that they would out bid each other for your friendship and commerce on which so much depends? When the low countries withdrew themselves from the dominion of Spain, did England, France, and the other powers immediately set about ravaging their sea ports and seizing their ships? Did they not, on the contrary, exert themselves directly and indirectly to assist them? The case is similar, the event would be similar; and that Great Britain would not be powerful enough at sea, when separated from her colonies; to prevent this assistance, I shall refer my readers to Massie's estimates, the authority of which has never been disputed, and which demonstrates, that more than half the naval power of Great-Britain stands on her American foundation.

Canadians, and unnumbered tribes of savages; swords flaming in the front and rear, pestilence, desolation and famine, are all marshalled in a most dreadful order by this church militant author.——But let us somewhat minutely examine the picture, and see whether, stript of its false colouring, it has any thing really terrifying. His Reverence begins with assuring us, that there is no room to doubt, but that such an army as was employed in the reduction of Canada (that is, an army of seven thousand men) would be more than sufficient for the conquest of all the disaffected American Colonies, (which are in fact all the Colonies) should such a resolution become necessary in order to reduce them to obedience. For my own part I think there is very great reason to doubt, that seven thousand, even of the best troops, are able to conquer two hundred thousand of the most disorderly peasantry upon earth, if they are animated in defence of every thing they hold most dear and sacred; and there is still greater reason to doubt, that seven thousand very indifferent troops composed of the refuse of an exhausted nation, few of whom have seen action of any kind, should be able to conquer two hundred thousand active, vigorous yeomanry, fired with the noble ardor, we see prevalent through the continent, all armed, all expert in the use of arms almost from their cradles. The success of Quebec it is true, does infinite honour to the English arms, the army was, I believe, only seven thousand, the enemy were perhaps more than double, but sixteen thousand men are not two hundred thousand. The fate of Canada, depended upon one decisive action, but it is impossible to calculate how many victories must be gained before these Colonies could be subdued, whereas a single victory gained by the colonies must decide the contest in their favour. In the affair of Quebec there is another circumstance to be considered, it was Wolfe, who commanded; a man of the most wonderful talents, formed to level all difficulties; to render the most despicable soldiery, almost instantaneously, an army of heroes. In short, the genius of the man was so extraordinary, the event was so extraordinary that no inferences can be drawn from it; but this without presumption may be asserted, that no General now existing in the British service, would with double or treble his number have succeeded in the same circumstances. One thing more I must add in honour of that illustrious personage, that the same greatness of soul which qualified him to conquer the natural hereditary enemies of his country, would have made him reject with horror the Hangman's office, which others who are not endowed with conquering attributes, will with readiness accept.

It is notorious that Mr. Wolfe was not only the first of soldiers, but that he was a most liberal virtuous citizen, that he was passionately attached to the liberties of his country, and of mankind; and that he was particularly an enemy to large standing armies in time of peace. It is on the other hand remarkable, that all the advocates for standing armies; all those who are the fondest of the saddling and parade of war, are the most active in avoiding real service.

This tremendous soothsayer, on the supposition that so great a miracle should happen in our favour, as that the trifling body of five hundred thousand men, though firmly united (for every man in America, firmly united, would not amount to less) should be able to withstand this seven thousand; goes on to rattle in our ears, armies of Hessians and Hanoverians. I wish to Heaven he had for once deviated into probability and truth. I wish ten thousand of them could possibly be transported to-morrow. The purpose they would answer, is a purpose devoutly to be wished for; they would be an addition to this continent of just so many useful and excellent citizens, for I will venture to affirm, (affirming is infectious) that in less than four months not two of these ten thousand would remain with their colours. But does not this Reverend gentleman know, that in the year 1764 a convention was formed by most of the Princes of the Empire at the head of which convention were the Emperor himself and the King of Prussia, to prevent the alarming emigrations which threatened depopulation to Germany? Does he not know that no troops can march out of the empire without the consent of the empire? Does he not know that the Elector of Hanover and the Emperor are upon exceeding ill terms? Does he not know that the Elector of Hanover and the King of Prussia are still upon worse? Is he sure that the Landgrave of Hesse would sell his troops (for as not one man would return back to their country, he must consider them as forever sold?) Is he sure that as the finances of Great-Britain and the vast sum necessary for this purchase would be conveniently found? Is he sure that the state of Hanover would consent to such a draining of their country? ————— I know not how it is; but his most excellent Majesty George the third, who in England is justly esteemed the most gracious of sovereigns, the wisest and best of Kings, is not very popular in the Electorate of Hanover. These people seem to think it hard that two hundred and twenty thousand pounds should annually be drawn from them, for the purposes (as they conceive it) of corrupting the members of St. Stephen's chapel, in order to support the power and authority of a set of men, who from the beginning have been enemies to the succession

cession of the Hanover line, and who shewed a particular animosity to their last and favourite prince, George the second; but these difficulties (great and unsurmountable as to a common mortal they appear) our divine exorcist has in an instant conjured down, and by a single motion of his enchanted wand, has transported whole armies, in spite of their respective Princes, and without the consent of their respective states, from the interior parts of Germany across the Atlantic into the plains of New-England and Pennsylvania. But he does not confine himself to the introduction of his Germans. He proceeds next to erect the royal standard, to which he tells us that all who have the courage to declare themselves friends to government, will undoubtedly resort, and these he says in a good cause, will be of themselves formidable to their opposers: Dreadfully formidable they must be indeed: There would resort to it, let me see, (for the respectable town of Rye have declared themselves a kind of neutrals, rather than friends to government) there would resort to it, Mr. Justice Sewell, the honourable Mr. Paxton, Brigadier Ruggles, and about eight or ten more mandamus councilmen, with perhaps twice their number of expectants, and not less than twenty of the unrecanted Hutchinsonian addressers. These the four provinces of New-England alone would send forth--New York would furnish six, seven, or probable eight volunteers from a certain knot, who are in possession or expectation of contracts, and the fourth part of a dozen of high flying church of England Romanized priests. I represent to my self the formidable countenance they will make when arranged under the royal or ministerial standard; but what will add to the terror of the appearance, will be their reverend Pontefex himself, whom I conceive marching in the front, an Inquisitorial frown upon his brow, his bands and canonicals floating to the air, bearing a cross in his hands, with the tremendous motto, In hoc signo vinces, flaming upon it in capital letters of blood, leading them on, and exciting them to victory. It is impossible that men, who are not under an insatiation by the judgment of heaven should flatter themselves that forty thousand American Yeomanry (for we are assured by the same great authority that more than forty thousand cannot be brought to action) should stand the shock of this dreadful Phalanx.

But I should beg pardon for attempting to be ludicrous upon a subject which demands our utmost indignation. I shall now therefore on the presumption that the people of England should be so lost to sense, virtue and spirit, as to suffer their profligate misrulers to persevere in their present measures, endeavour to state to you what is their force and what is yours. I shall endeavour to remove the false terrors which this writer would

hold out, in order to intimidate you from the defence of your liberties and those of your posterity, that he and his similars may wallow in sinecures and benefices heaped up from the fruits of your labour and industry.

Great-Britain has, I believe, of infantry at home (comprehending Ireland, and exclusive of the guards) fifteen thousand men. They find the greatest difficulty in keeping the regiments up to any thing near their establishment---what they are able to procure are of the worst sort. They are composed of the most debauched weavers, apprentices, the scum of the Irish Roman Catholics, who desert upon every occasion, and a few, very few, Scotch, who are not strong enough to carry packs. This is no exaggeration; those who have been lately at Boston, represent the soldiers there (one or two regiments excepted) as very defective in size and apparently in strength: But we shall be told they are still regulars, and regulars have an irresistible advantage.---There is, perhaps, more imposition in the term regular troops, than in any of the jargon which issues from the mouth of a quack doctor. I do not mean to insinuate, that a disorderly mob are equal to a trained disciplined body of men; but I mean, that all the essentials necessary to form infantry for real service may be acquired in a few months.* I mean, that it is very possible for men to be clothed in red, to be expert in all the tricks of the parade, to call themselves regular troops, and yet, by attaching themselves principally or solely to the tinsel and shew of war, be totally unfit for real service.---This, I am told, is a good deal the case of the present British infantry: If they can acquit themselves tolerably in the puerile reviews exhibited for the amusement of royal masters and misses in Hyde Park or Wimbledon Common, it is sufficient.

In

* There cannot be a stronger illustration of the truth here advanced than the Prussian army. They are composed of about one third of the King's own subjects, two thirds foreigners. The third consisting of his own subjects, are, when the exercising season is over, (which lasts six or seven weeks) suffered to return to their families, and attend to the business of husbandry; half of the other two thirds, consisting of foreigners, are not only permitted, but encouraged to work at their trades in the garrison towns, and never touch a musket for the rest of the year, so that, in fact, only one third are, in the modern language, to be called regular soldiers: These generally make their escape the first opportunity: It may be said therefore, that the King of Prussia has gained all his victories with a sort of militia.

In the beginning of the late war, some of the most esteemed regular regiments were sent over to this country ; they were well dressed ; they were well powdered ; they were perfect masters of their manual exercise ; they fired together in platoons ; but fatal experience taught us, that they knew not how to fight. While your militia were frequently crowned with success, these regulars were defeated or baffled for three years successively in every part of the continent---at length indeed, (after repeated losses and disgraces) they became excellent troops, but not until they had absolutely forgotten every thing which we are assured, must render regulars quite irresistible. The corps sent from this country under General Monkton, was, I believe, for its number, one of the best armies that ever was led to conquest, and yet, if I have been rightly informed, there was not a single regiment of them that could go through the manual exercise, or at best, they performed it most wretchedly. It is likewise said, that when, after their glorious and rapid conquest of Martinico, they were joined by the spruce regiments from Europe, such was their uncouth appearance, that they were scarce honoured with the title of soldiers by those gentlemen. Upon the whole, it is most certain, that men may be smartly dressed, keep their arms bright, be called regulars, be expert in all the anticks of a review, and yet be very unfit for real action. It is equally certain, that a militia, by confining themselves to essentials, by a simplification of the necessary manœuvres, may become in a very few months, a most formidable infantry. The yeomanry of America have, besides infinite advantages over the peasantry of other countries ; they are accustomed from their infancy to fire arms ; they are expert in the use of them. Whereas the lower and middle people of England, are, by the tyranny of certain laws almost as ignorant in the use of a musket, as they are of the ancient Castapulta. The Americans are likewise, to a man, skilful in the management of the instruments necessary for all military works ; such as spades, pickaxes, hatchets, &c. Taking therefore all circumstances into consideration, there will be no rashness in affirming, that this continent may have, formed for action, in three or four months an hundred thousand infantry : For as to the assertion of one friendly adviser, that no more than forty thousand could act to advantage, I confess I do not understand it, nor does he, I believe, understand himself. If he means, that sixty thousand men cannot be ranged in a field capable of containing only forty thousand, we shall all agree with him : But how in the operations of a war upon a vast continent double this number should be a disadvantage, I can have no conception.

Let

Let one simple general plan be adopted for the formation and subdivision of your battalions ; let them be instructed only in so much of the manual exercise as to prevent confusion, and accidents in loading and firing ; let them be taught to form, to retreat, to advance, to change their front, to rally by the colours ; let them be taught to reduce themselves from a line of fire to a line of impression, that is, from two deep to four, or six, or eight. This is all so easy and simple, that it may be acquired in three months. Let some plan of this sort be adopted, I say, and there is no doubt but that, in the time I have prescribed, you may have an army on foot of seventy, eighty, or an hundred thousand men, equal to all the services of war.

Should this be admitted, it will be still objected that you have no able officers to conduct you. I do not know that you have ; but is it certain that those sent to dragoon you have better ? I have taken some pains to inform myself what methods these gentlemen, said to be bred to arms, take to qualify themselves in a superior degree for the profession. What is their routine of instruction ? Do they read much ? I am assured that they do not ; from books alone the theory of war can be acquired, and the English service in times of peace affords them no practical lessons ; for mounting guard once or twice a week, or the preparation for the review of a single regiment can never be esteemed as such*.

Another circumstance, Americans, may be added for your comfort. It has been allowed by some of the most candid of the regulars themselves, that during the last war upon this continent, your countrymen the provincial field officers, were in general more understanding and capable than their own of the

* It is much to be lamented, that the gentlemen of the army do not apply more of the many leisure hours they have upon their hands to reading. The majority of them are of a generous disposition, which, did they cultivate, by conversing with the great historians and orators of antiquity, and the more liberal political writers of our own country, a standing army would be something less an object of jealousy to all virtuous citizens. We might perhaps see them instead of being advocates and partizans of the present ministry, a check upon their wickedness. I am inclined to think that few or none of the officers have condescended to inform themselves of the merit of the present contest. Let me conjure them for once to read coolly and candidly the whole process, afterwards to lay their hands upon their heart, and answer, whether the people of America in general, and of Boston in particular, are " more sinned against or sinning ?"

the same rank. But the history of the civil war in the year 1641, furnishes us with the strongest instances that excellent officers may be soon formed from country gentlemen, citizens, lawyers and farmers. The parliament's army (or as our priestly writer would call them, the rebellious republicans) were chiefly composed of this class of men. In the beginning of this war they were treated with the same affected contempt, and almost in the same opprobrious terms as you, the people of America are by your friendly and decent adviser.

Whoever would infer from the tenure of these papers, that the writer is desirous of precipitating, or could look with indifference upon the calamities of a civil war, does him great injustice. He considers them with all the horror natural to feeling men and honest citizens. He execrates the memory of those men to whom they may justly be attributed, but he is persuaded that they never originated (at least in states of any considerable extent) in the turbulent dispositions of the people, nor in the arts of demagogues, but in the oppression of their rulers, in the wantonness, folly, pride, or avarice of King, Ministers, or Governors. The Grisers of Switzerland, the Granvels of Holland, the Lauds and Straffords of England, were the undoubted authors of the tragedies acted in their respective countries: And if this continent should be stained with the blood of a single citizen, it can never be charged to the unreasonable pretensions of the people, but to the Barnards, Hutchinsons, and some other traitors of a similar stamp. He is convinced, that being prepared for a civil war is the surest means of preventing it; that to keep the swords of your enemies in their scabbards you must whet your own. He is convinced, that remonstrances, petitions, prayers and supplications will make no impression on our callous court and abandoned Parliament; England, Ireland, America, even Guernsey, Jersey and Minorca are witnesses of their inefficacy. He is convinced that fear alone can operate; there are symptoms that it already begins to operate; the monster, Tyranny, already begins to pant, press her now with ardor, and she is down; already the Ministry have expressed in their letters an inclination to make some concessions; to meet you half way: which I suppose, may be construed thus, that as they find they have it not in their power to establish, by force, the despotism which they aimed at, they shall be very well satisfied, if you will just cede so much of your rights and privileges, as will enable them by extending their pecuniary influence and sapping your virtue, to take away the rest at their leisure.

There now remains, people of America, one consideration, which (however it may be taken) I think it my duty to offer. History tells us that the free states of Greece, Thebes, Sparta

Sparta, Athens, and Syracuse, were all in their turns subjugated by the force or art of tyrants. They almost all in their turns recovered their liberty and destroyed their tyrants. The first act upon the recovery of their liberty was to demolish those badges of slavery, citadels, strong holds, and military tenements: the Switzers did the same; the people of England (lost in corruption and lethargy as they are) could never be prevailed upon to suffer barracks amongst them; even the courtly Blackstone is startled at the idea. No separate camps, no barracks, no inland fortresses, says he, should be allowed; in fact, wherever barracks are, freedom cannot be said to exist, or she exists so lamely as scarcely to deserve the name.

It is with your consideration, Americans, whether these badges should remain or no. I shall now conclude, brave citizens, with invoking the almighty God from whom all virtues flow, to continue you in that spirit of unanimity and vigour which must insure you success, and immortalize you through all ages, as the champions and patrons of the human race.



